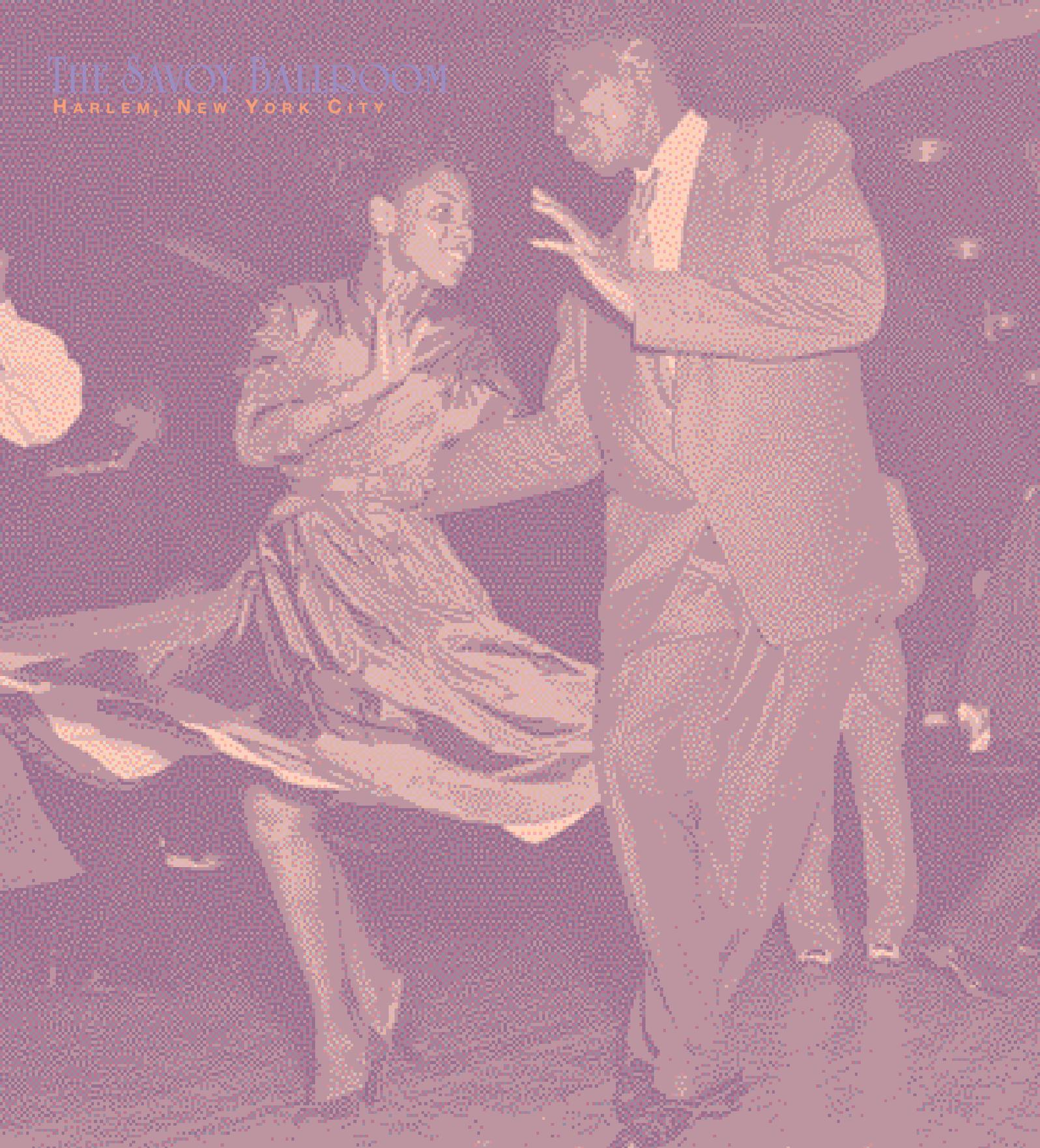


THE SAVOY BALLROOM  
HARLEM, NEW YORK CITY



Start the car, I know a whoopee spot  
Where the gin is cold, but the piano's hot

from *Overture/All That Jazz*  
"Chicago" movie soundtrack  
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# All That Jazz

by C. L. Smoak

**J**AZZ HAS BEEN LABELED HOT, COOL, SWING, BEBOP AND FUSION, yet it is all these styles and more. Jazz is the irrepressible expression of freedom, liberation, and individual rights through musical improvisation. It is a way people can express themselves and their emotions by means of music. As Art Blakely, noted jazz drummer and band leader, once said, “Jazz washes away the dust of everyday life.” Jazz has been called the purist expression of American democracy; a music built on individualism and compromise, independence and cooperation.

Though it was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in the late 1800s, jazz music was conceived over a period of 200 years from world influences including African, Latin American, and European. New Orleans, a major seaport of the United States, was the most cosmopolitan city of its time and a melting pot of cultures and nationalities. Even then, the city was known for its openness and vitality. Storyville, a part of town famous for bars and brothels, became the perfect environment for musicians to experiment and improvise with music.

By the 1890s there were two distinct styles of music played in New Orleans: ragtime and blues. Ragtime, with its innovative syncopated rhythms, was popular for dancing. It featured the piano accompanied by banjo and brass instruments. Blues, with its three-chord progressions and heartfelt lyrics, mirrored the call-and-response of gospel and spiritual music (see “The Red Hot Blues” in the January *Forum*). When musicians started to play the blues on horns, they took another step in the evolution of jazz.

Although New Orleans piano player Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton claimed that he invented jazz, in truth no one can be given credit for single-handedly creating this musical genre. The descendants of black slaves and white plantation owners, sometimes called creoles, played an important role in the history of jazz. Many creole musicians were classically trained in the European musical traditions and played in the symphony orchestras of New Orleans or in brass bands for parades, weddings, and funerals. These and many other innovative musicians, black and white, experimented with ragtime and blues, adding new instruments and creating space for improvisation. We can only look back to those musicians who left the greatest musical legacies and say that all of them helped to invent jazz.

(opposite)

**The Savoy Ballroom**  
© AP/WideWorld Photos

This couple dances gracefully down the dance floor of one of the biggest and most famous nightclubs in Harlem, the Savoy Ballroom. It was to the Savoy, an unofficially integrated club, that blacks and whites alike went to dance away their troubles during the Great Depression. The dance floor of maple and mahogany was one block long and had to be replaced every three years because of the wear from the dancers that came nightly. The best jazz musicians appeared regularly at the Savoy and continued to draw crowds until its closing on October 3, 1958.

# JELLY ROLL MORTON



© AP/WideWorld Photos

## *The Jazz Journey*

Buddy Bolden, a cornet player who led bands in New Orleans from the mid 1890s until 1906, had a big impact on the early formation of jazz music. Although he never recorded any of his songs, Bolden was regarded by many of his peers as the first band leader to play improvisational jazz. He and many other jazz greats, such as Joe “King” Oliver, Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong, and “Jelly Roll” Morton, played their new music in Storyville until it was closed down in 1917. Morton was also an innovative and accomplished composer; he was the first jazzman to write his compositions in musical notation. In New York City in 1917, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, made up of five white musicians from New

# LOUIS

Orleans, made in the first jazz recording. That record, “Livery Stable Blues,” was an immediate smash hit and sold more than any previous record.

Around this time came another benchmark of jazz music, known as The Great Migration. It was a period when blacks from the south went to northern cities to seek work and create a better life for themselves. Among them were many musicians. When they arrived in cities such as Chicago, Memphis, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and New York, they brought jazz with them. An additional factor in the spread of jazz was Prohibition. In the 1920s, when alcoholic drinks were declared illegal in the United States and bars were closed down, thousands of speakeasies (clandestine bars that served alcohol) opened in towns and cities across the nation. In many of them, especially in the larger cities, people wanted to hear the bold new style of dance music called jazz.

In Chicago, cornet player Louis Armstrong joined King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band in 1922 and took the city by storm. A protégé of Oliver at the time, Armstrong became renown for his joyful and exuberant playing and singing. However, white musicians have sometimes been credited with establishing the Chicago style of jazz, indicating the diversity of jazz as well as the racial tensions of the era. Band leader Paul Whiteman, who was advertised as the King of Jazz, had one of the most celebrated and imitated bands in America in the 1920s. His greatest contribution to jazz was that he recognized it as an art

# ARMSTRONG

*Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton (above left)*

This 1938 photograph of Morton is from a recording session for the Library of Congress in which he played and sang, and spoke on the origins of jazz.

*Louis Armstrong (left)*

This publicity portrait is from 1931, prior to Armstrong’s first European tour.

*Paul Whiteman (above right)*

A smiling Whiteman is photographed while conducting his band.

*William “Count” Basie (far right)*

This publicity portrait of Count Basie from 1936 was made to promote his first recording session for Decca Records.



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# Paul Whiteman

until the 1970s. Many famous players got their start in Basie's enduring orchestra, which was known for featuring the talents of soloists.

In New York in the 1920s, the migration of jazz music into Harlem's music halls was in full stride. Several innovations of jazz artists during this period were to have a profound effect on the music. Fletcher Henderson and his band, tired of playing polite dance music, combined orchestral arrangement with free improvisation, thus creating a style called swing. Louis Armstrong joined Henderson's band in 1924 and was instrumental in the development of this new style. Soon Armstrong was making studio recordings under his own name.

form and wanted to orchestrate jazz music to make it more commercially viable. Unfortunately, in doing so, much of the improvisation and spontaneity of the music was lost.

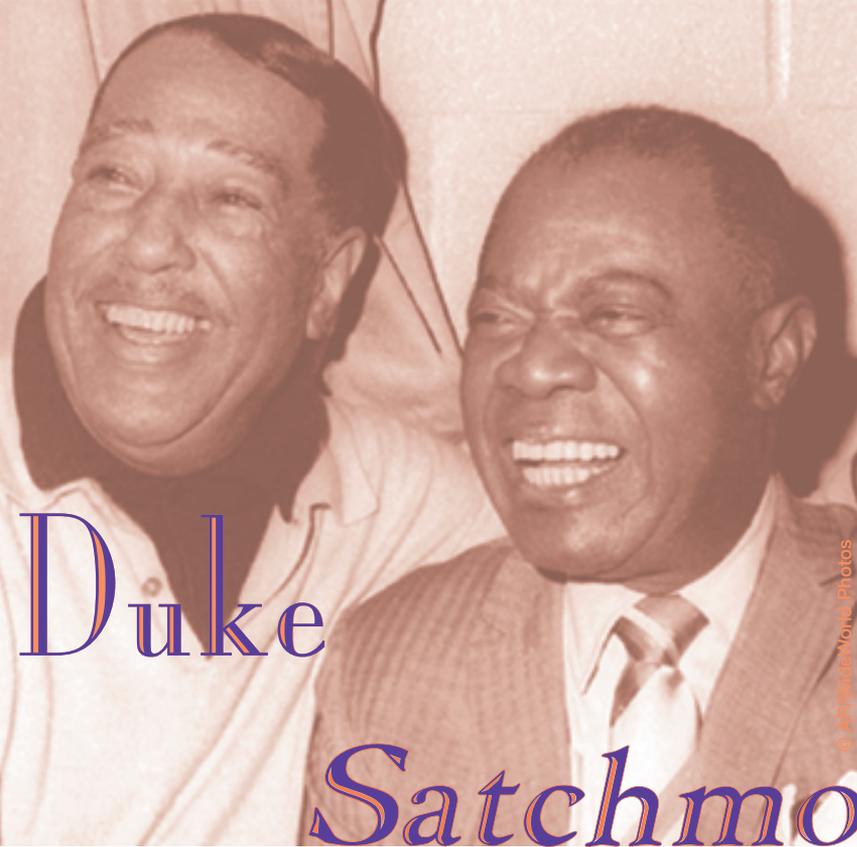
In Kansas City, jazz musicians created a distinctive style based on ragtime, rural blues, and new musical ideas from vaudeville shows. Two key figures were piano player and band leader William "Count" Basie and saxophonist Lester Young. Radio broadcasts of Basie's orchestra in the mid 1930s gave him wide exposure that resulted in recording contracts and bookings around the country. He led his orchestra and continued to tour

# Count



© AP/WideWorld Photos

# Basie



© AP/WideWorld Photos

Duke

Satchmo

**Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong (above)**

The Duke and Satchmo share a happy moment after a tribute to Ellington in February 1970 at Madison Square Garden in New York City. An ardent admirer of Ellington's work, Armstrong wrote: "Duke Ellington has always been my man of music..." in the notes to an album that they recorded together in 1961.

**Benny Goodman (below)**

Benny Goodman, clarinetist and band leader, was known as the "King of Swing." This is a publicity photograph from the film "Big Broadcast of 1937."



© AP/WideWorld Photos

Benny Goodman

**A**ll I am saying is, 'See what a wonderful world it would be if only we would give it a chance?' Love, baby, love. That's the secret.

Louis Armstrong  
*What a Wonderful World*

Although his bands the Hot Five and the Hot Seven never played before a live audience, their studio recordings would become classics of jazz. These influential bands included Armstrong's wife Lil Hardin on piano and occasionally as composer and singer.

**Notable Jazz Musicians**

Armstrong, or "Satchmo," was an incomparable innovator in the early years of jazz. He invented scat singing, which is singing without clear words and using nonsense syllables instead. The legend goes that he first sang scat when he dropped his sheet of song lyrics during a recording session and was forced to improvise on the spot. As his career and music progressed, he became the undisputed King of Jazz. After World War II and into the 1960s, Armstrong served as Ambassador Satch, performing concert tours around the globe under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of State. His infectious and optimistic outlook is summarized by the spoken introduction to his song "What a Wonderful World": "All I'm saying is, 'See what a wonderful world it would be if only we would give it a chance?' Love, baby, love. That's the secret."

Another important figure in the development of jazz was Edward "Duke" Ellington. Originally a piano player from Washington, DC, Ellington found success in New York as a band leader and composer. During his long and prolific career he wrote songs for his orchestra that have become jazz standards, including "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got that Swing)," "In a Sentimental Mood," and "Take the 'A' Train." He also wrote many compositions longer than the two or three minutes that fit on one side of a record, including the symphonic suite "Black, Brown, and Beige," (subtitled "A Tone Parallel to the History of the Negro in America").

Throughout the Great Depression (1929 to 1941), jazz continued to lift the spirits of Americans.

# Billie Holiday

Though the nation was poor, jazzmen Armstrong, Ellington, and others prospered from their music. Clarinetist and band leader Benny Goodman spread the swinging music of jazz on his “Let’s Dance” radio show, which was broadcast on Saturday nights. There were grave inequalities between black and white Americans in this period, and the situation wasn’t much different among musicians. Goodman, who was white, was praised by some and scorned by others for hiring black musicians to play in his bands. Both then and now, his integration of his band is considered an important early step toward racial integration of American society.

In the late 1930s and 1940s, vocalists Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald gained nationwide fame. With their rich and soulful voices, these women were two of the most famous jazz singers of their day. Billie Holiday sang with several great orchestra leaders, including Count Basie and Artie Shaw. She was admired for her ability to transform popular songs into emotionally profound pieces. Ella Fitzgerald, nicknamed “The First Lady of Song,” sang a variety of styles with authority and set high standards for the interpretation of many well-known ballads. She was a virtuoso scat singer, using all of the improvisatory genius of the finest jazz instrumentalists. During her career, she sang with the bands of Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie. Her tremendous musical artistry won her 14 Grammy Awards, including a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1967.

In the early 1940s, two men arrived on the music scene who were ultimately to change the course of jazz forever. They were alto saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter “Dizzy” Gillespie. They jammed at Minton’s Play House in Harlem with band members that included pianist Thelonious Monk and drummer Kenny Clark. Their jam sessions were free from the regimentation and commercialism of big swing bands and allowed for greater musical experimentation. Parker brought new phrasing and solos based on the chords underlying the melody. Gillespie inverted chord changes and extended the rhythm and sophistication of jazz into new melodic and harmonic content. Their style of jazz music was known as bebop or simply bop. Initially it was criticized by journalists and music critics, but eventually bebop gained a large following of fans and fellow musicians. Throughout his long career as a band leader and jazz pioneer, Gillespie played the trumpet with virtuosity in both large and small ensembles, often as the featured



*Billie Holiday* (above)

A serene publicity photograph of Holiday is from 1947.

*Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong* (below)

Louis Armstrong, as a guest performer, clowns around at Ella’s opening in 1971 at the Empire Room at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City.



# Ella



### Teaching Bebop, 1947 *(above)*

Noted jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie shows students a phrase of music in the bebop style. Gillespie's development of inverting chord changes allowed for new melodies and harmonies.

### International Jazz Festival in Paris, 1949 *(above)*

Charlie Parker, left, and Russell Big Chief Moore perform on the opening day for the festival. Similar to Gillespie, Parker developed new phrasing and solos based on the chords underlying the melody.

soloist. His songs "Night in Tunisia" and "Salt Peanuts" are considered classics of the bebop style. In 1956, he toured internationally as the first jazz ambassador sponsored by the State Department.

## *Jazz Grows*

In the late 1950s and 1960s, some musicians branched off from mainstream music to combine jazz and classical music, most notably pianist John Lewis, who led the Modern Jazz Quartet, and composer Gunther Schuller. Two other innovators during this time were bassist and composer Charlie Mingus and alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman. Mingus pioneered the bass as a melodic, rather than rhythmic, instrument. Coleman introduced an atonal, discordant style of avant-garde jazz, which retained the steady rhythmic swing of jazz but did away with chord progressions altogether. Coleman's fans found his theory of harmelodics and his music liberating, but his critics—and there were many—considered it musical anarchy.

At the same time another style of jazz was developing that derived much of its inspiration from classical music. This jazz, soft in tone yet highly complex, was known as the cool style. Trumpet player and band leader Miles Davis pioneered cool jazz, and this genre came into its own with his 1959 album "Kind of Blue." It featured pianist Bill Evans and tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, who had joined Davis' band in 1955. The album had a set of compositions that remained in one chord and key

for up to sixteen measures at a time, creating a vast expanse for solo improvisation. Later, Davis' fruitful collaboration with composer and arranger Gil Evans produced several other landmark albums of cool jazz, most notably "Miles Ahead" and "Sketches of Spain," which is based on a piece by Spanish composer Joaquin Rodrigo. As Davis explored new sounds and arrangements, his influence on jazz music expanded. Many musicians who played in his various bands would later lead their own groups and take jazz in new directions. Their names read like a Who's Who list of contemporary jazz: saxophonists John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley and Wayne Shorter; bass players Ron Carter and Dave Holland; pianists Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, Joe Zawinul (from Austria), and Chick Corea; drummers Tony Williams and John DeJohnette; guitarists John McLaughlin (from England) and John Scofield; and percussionist Airto Moreira (from Brazil).

In the 1960s, rock and roll music threatened to steal the youth audience for jazz. While some jazz artists like tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon went into exile overseas, others chose to stay and incorporate new elements into their jazz sound. Miles Davis, already an innovator, blazed another new path in jazz with the style that came to be called fusion. Fusion featured electronic guitar and bass, organ, and percussion beyond the usual drum set. Once again, Davis recorded a seminal album of the new



**Charlie Mingus, 1974** (above)

Charlie Mingus, bassist and composer, was one of the first musicians to explore the use of the bass as a melodic instead of a rhythmic instrument.

style: his 1969 recording “Bitches Brew.” Around the same time, other more rock-oriented groups took the opposite direction, that is, they were adding elements of jazz—such as brass and woodwind instruments and solo improvisations—to rock music. The two rock bands that achieved the greatest commercial success by adding these jazz elements were Chicago and Blood, Sweat, and Tears.

Mainstream jazz in the United States was also influenced by the rhythms of Latin America, in particular, by musicians from Brazil and Cuba. Dizzy Gillespie, saxophonist Stan Getz, and flutist Herbie Mann were among those American jazz musicians who incorporated Latin American rhythms and chord progressions into their repertoire and added conga drums and other percussion instruments to their groups. The song-writing duo of Antonio Carlos Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes plus guitarist and singer João Gilberto are the Brazilian musicians most often credited with bringing the sensuous sounds of bossa nova to the world of jazz. The Cuban ensemble Irakere led by Chucho Valdez made a huge impression on jazz musicians worldwide in the 1970s and 1980s with its technical virtuosity on the traditional instruments of jazz (keyboards, brass, woodwind) and its complex Afro-Cuban polyrhythms. After tasting international success in Irakere, saxophonist Paquito D’Rivera and trumpet player Arturo Sandoval left the band and have achieved critical and commercial artistic success in their solo careers.



**Miles Davis, 1987** (above)

In the late 1950s, Davis developed cool jazz, which was inspired by classical music. As music changed in the 1960s so did Davis. He again led the way in developing yet another style of jazz: fusion.

Giving new meaning to an older influence, neo-classic jazz has brought listeners from around the world back to a more traditional sound. Rather than simply recreate the music of earlier jazz styles, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis and his brother saxophonist Branford Marsalis have extended it through new and innovative approaches to harmony, melody, and rhythm. Trained as a classical musician, Wynton became the first person to win Grammy Awards in both jazz and classical categories

**Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter, 2002** (below)

Two jazz legends perform at an awards ceremony of the International Committee of Artists for Peace in Santa Monica, CA.





© AP/WideWorld Photos

in the same year (1982). In 1997, he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for jazz music. In his role as director of the jazz orchestra at the renowned Lincoln Center in New York, Wynton has helped take jazz to a new generation of listeners through educational programs for youth that emphasize the history of the music.

## Conclusion

Since its inception in New Orleans over a century ago, jazz has become a global musical phenomenon with devoted fans and talented musicians all over the world. This musical diversity has produced rich blends of melodies and harmonies. As jazz has spread in popularity, it has influenced other forms of music. It has changed the way musicians view their art—from a confining, restricted reenactment of a composer’s work, to an expressive, unique translation by the individual musician.

Jazz—the quintessential American music—is a music of freedom and innovation, not just for the artist but for the listener as well. As Wynton Marsalis noted, “It is an improvisational art that makes itself up as it goes along, just like the country that gave it birth.”



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### Arturo Sandoval, 2001 (top)

Sandoval has received Emmy and Grammy awards for his music.

### Wynton Marsalis on the A Train, 1999 (bottom)

In honor of Ellington’s 100th birthday, Marsalis accompanies musicians from the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra to play Ellington’s famous song, “Take the A Train,” on an actual “A” subway train in New York City.

## Web Sites of Interest

### Public Broadcasting Service

<http://www.pbs.org/jazz/>

This Web site provides a remarkable amount of material for teaching about jazz, including biographies of musicians, history of the music, lesson plans, and audio files.

### The Styles of Jazz

<http://www.acns.nwu.edu/jazz/styles/>

This chart of jazz styles is derived from Joachim Berendt’s *The Jazz Book*. It is an excellent time line and visual aid when tracing blues, jazz, and European classical music.

### Jazz Roots

<http://www.jass.com/>

This Web site has history, as well as photos, quizzes, fun facts, and jazz e-cards.

### All About Jazz

<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/>

This Web site has forums, reviews, interviews, profiles, and a detailed timeline of jazz history. You can also click on jazz radio or watch a film clip.

### Red, Hot & Cool

<http://members.aol.com/Jlackritz/jazz/#History>

This site is mostly a reference page, with over 200 links and resources listed. It leads to numerous other sites about jazz.

### The Atlantic Monthly

<http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/jazz/articles.htm>

This site contains 32 articles about jazz published in the magazine beginning in 1922 and continuing to the present.

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